



ADGP's advisory to keep women police officers off security duty kicks up row

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Chennai: Activists and women professionals slammed additional director-general of police (law and order) S Davidson Devasirvatham's recent advisory to not deploy women officers for security duty. While they said it was discriminatory, the state police issued a clarification on Saturday saying the instructions were meant to speed up the investigation of Pocsos cases and not to discriminate against women officers.

A joint statement signed by 43 women professionals from different walks of life, including retired IPS officer Thilagavathi and advocate Sudha Ramalingam, condemned the ADGP's advisory and called it discriminatory in nature and urged its retraction.

On June 30, while addressing an internal meeting, ADGP Devasirvatham instructed his subordinate officials not to deploy women officers for security duties of importance and, instead, asked them to assess how many women police personnel, armed reserve personnel, and special police teams would be required in security duty well in advance.

Activists took objection to the advisory, saying that providing security is a paramount duty of police and depriving women officers of the command job is discrimination. "The state has seen woman DGP Letika Saran leading the entire police force," said advocate Sudha Ramalingam.

"Women cannot be discriminated against and cannot be denied opportunities or assignments merely on the basis of gender. Women are now increasingly occupying positions in armed forces and have proved their mettle. In this light, the advice issued by the ADGP stands against constitutional values," said the statement.

On Saturday, the state police clarified that the ADGP's advice was to address critical requirement to prioritise probe and prosecution of cases under Pocso Act and other crimes against women and children. "As per legal provisions, it is mandatory to file final reports in Pocso cases within 60 days. The pendency in such cases requires immediate attention and keeping this in mind, such advice was given not to excessively draw women police personnel for bandobust duties. The primary objective of this instruction was to ensure that women police personnel, who play an indispensable role in recording statements and investigating the sensitive cases of crimes against women and children, are not diverted unnecessarily," said a note from DGP office. The note also clarified that women police personnel will continue to be used for bandobust wherever necessary.

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